

Dear Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

My name is Katlyn Kinsella, my husband and I currently operated a first generation 40 cow dairy in Falls Village, CT. We are the only dairy farm left in Falls Village. We started our dairy on a rented facility in 2009, when milk prices were at an all-time low, with the help of our minimal assets and our families we have come a long way. Over the past six years we have grown our herd and business exponentially and along the way have experienced the many ups and downs of farming, life and a volatile milk market. Like all farmers we battle many circumstances that out of our control, weather, increases in cost of production and decreases in pay price from the dairies. We have been fortunate to have the access to the safety nets that the government has put in place to assist us when things become volatile. The Dairy Sustainability Act that is currently a part of the Community Investment Account is a huge part of why we can continue farming in Connecticut, and why we strongly oppose cutting this and any other funding to the agricultural sector.

Dairy farming and farming in general is a cornerstone of Connecticut. We are members of the community, we are stewards of the land, and we add value to the economy each and every day. We work 365 day of the year to provide an excellent quality product for consumers, taking the utmost care of our animals, and the land to sustain our livelihoods and Connecticut's landscape.

Programs like the Dairy Sustainability Act provides one of the safety nests needed to keep dairy farms afloat each and every year. Some years up to 80% of cost of production is greater than the Pay Price we receive. Because the milk markets are set by the federal government and nationally based, producers in the northeast especially Connecticut are subject to a much higher cost of production. As noted in a study done by the University of Connecticut in 2011, cost of milk production on Connecticut dairies was an average of \$31.52/cwt. 2014 milk prices averaged out at around \$24.29/cwt which is the record high for milk prices (as seen in the 12/29/14 Agri-Mark Milk Price, under the Boston Blend Price) .

2014 marked a year of highs, as dairy farmers we experience all time high milk prices, a great year for forages and with that another year of high cost of production. So while it was a year of record high milk prices, for Connecticut farmers like myself, it was really just a year of prices where we could pay the bills, and make much needed improvements in facilities and other business operations to help us weather the next down turn of milk prices. Moving into 2015 with a winter that won't quit, making the daily work load that much more challenging; we also find ourselves faced with a record crash of milk prices, with the forecast showing an astronomical drop to \$16 by the middle of the year.

Many reasons out of our control such as, the over production of milk in other parts of the country such as in Wisconsin, Texas and Michigan, combined with foreign policy decisions of china, Russia and Mexico, have contributed in the crash of milk prices for our farms and farm across the country. Leaving us to rely on state and federal support until the markets bounce back, nearby states like Massachusetts and Maine already have prepared for the need of their

farm families through safety net program, this is not the time for Connecticut to be cutting their support.

As the socially driven communities we live in demand more local base product and to know more and feel more apart of where their food comes from it is in the best interest of Connecticut to keep farms in the state and to support us for wanting to continue to farm and sustain the land that we love and the state that supports and values our livelihoods.



Sincerely,

Tim & Katlyn Kinsella

Birch Mill Farm Partnership